

Two Large Hospital Groups Announce Merger

LOS ANGELES (UPI) — Two nonprofit, multi-hospital organizations have voted to merge their 233 medical centers in 21 states to form the nation's largest network of community hospitals.

The merger involves Phoenix-based Associated Health Systems and United Healthcare Systems of Kansas City,

Mo.

The two will combine to form American Healthcare Systems, which will be based in San Diego with offices in Chicago and Washington.

Officials said the merger will provide the 26 regional hospital systems that make up the organizations' members with shared administrative

and purchasing services, participation in profit-seeking new ventures, improved access to debt markets and a united lobbying voice in Washington.

American Healthcare Systems' 26 shareholders include the Los Angeles-based Lutheran Hospital Society of Southern California, Healthwest Foundations in North-

ridge, Calif., Intermountain Health Care Inc. in Salt Lake City, Health Central Inc. in Minneapolis and SamCor of Phoenix.

Charles M. Ewell, formerly director of Arthur Young & Co.'s health care consulting practice, will be president of American Healthcare Systems, with Samuel J. Tibbitts, presi-

dent of Lutheran hospitals, acting as chairman of the new network.

Ewell said the new parent organization will be a tax-paying business, with all profits going to support the members' nonprofit hospitals.

"The companies are not merging assets, but they will be involved in mutually financed equity ventures,"

Ewell said. "The primary purpose is still to provide community service and hold down the costs of providing health care."

He called the new corporate structure "the shape of the future" of the hospital industry and estimated that the merger would put 45,000 hospital beds under a single network.

Great Salt Lake's Tidal Swell Could Last for 30 Years

SALT LAKE CITY (UPI) — If the Great Salt Lake rises another eight feet, as experts predict, it could produce a 30-year flood that would inundate portions of five cities and 50 miles of desert, a

state report says.

In a report based on studies dating back to the lake's first surveys in the mid 1840s, the Utah Geological Survey says a level of 4,217 feet above sea level would

spread water across portions of western Salt Lake City, North Salt Lake, Woods Cross, West Bountiful and Centerville.

Salt Lake City International Airport, homes, industrial cen-

ters, sanitation plants, parks, streets, highways and railroad

tracks would be covered by water.

The brine would spread west for 35 to 50 miles, flooding Interstate 80, railroad tracks, the Bonneville salt flats and every business extracting minerals from the lake.

Wasatch Quake Could Kill Many

SALT LAKE CITY (UPI) — Although they cannot predict when it will happen, experts say with certainty that a major earthquake along Utah's populous Wasatch Front would kill hundreds of people and destroy billions of dollars worth of property.

Only a plan of preparedness can ease the impact, say scientists meeting in the Capitol for a two-

David Schwartz, a consultant to federal officials, said Salt Lake City and Provo appear to be most vulnerable to a quake of 7 to 7.5 magnitude on the Richter scale. That magnitude is a near certainty, Schwartz said. The timing is not.

"It could be tomorrow, it could be 50 years, it could be 100 years," Schwartz said.

danger in 10 Wasatch Front counties. The three-year study would help develop minimum building safety standards.

Matheson said state legislators are resistant to planning for floods, landslides and the rise of the Great Salt Lake. He said persuading them of the necessity to prepare for an earthquake has been all the more difficult.

MOVIE GUIDE FOR FAMILIES

G: "General Audiences." Film contains no materials most parents are likely to consider objectionable even for younger children.

PG: "Parental Guidance Suggested." Rating cautions parents they might consider some material unsuitable for children. It urges parents to inquire about the film before deciding on attendance.

R: "Restricted." Film contains adult-type material and those under 18 years of age are not admitted except in the company of a parent or an adult guardian.

X: This is patently an adult-type film and no one under 18 is admitted. The age limit may be higher in some places.

Motion Picture Association of America

National Briefs

Mondale Moves Far From Jackson

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (UPI) — Walter Mondale, stung by Jesse Jackson's criticism of his campaign strategy, says he will win the election "on my own."

Jackson has not met with Mondale since the Democratic convention ended nearly a month ago and Jackson has not campaigned for the Democratic ticket.

Retail Sales Down First Time Since March

WASHINGTON (UPI) — Retail sales slumped 0.9 percent in July, pulled down by the worst setback for department and discount stores in 17 years, the Commerce Department said Tuesday.

Sales of automobiles, construction supplies, furniture, clothing and gasoline all slipped in the first overall sales decline of any size since March.

"This is information that the

economy is really slowing down, perhaps a quarter after most people expected it," department chief economist, Robert Ortner, said.

But analysts in and out of government also said they believed spending on merchandise could rebound later this year.

"I don't think it's the end of the world," said economist Sandra Shaber of the Chase Econome-

trics analysis firm. "I actually think we'll see some more growth in consumer spending."

Sales in July were worth \$107.8 billion, \$975 million less than in June after seasonal adjustment. The decline was even steeper before adjustment.

The report suggested that demand is weakening, a development that could keep the unemployment rate from improving

even as it encourages Wall Street that interest rates will fall soon.

But because consumer spending has increased so much for so long during the economic recovery, the one-month decline was less than convincing evidence consumers are suddenly becoming more cautious.

"Slower growth of consumer spending should help to relieve pressure on the credit markets," Commerce Secretary Malcolm

Baldrige said.

"However, because of continuing gains in real disposable income and high levels of confidence, the outlook for the consumer sector remains good."

Retailers who felt the July decline the most were those operating general merchandise stores, a category that includes department and discount stores.

The 3.9 percent setback there was the biggest in 17 years.

Doctors Worried by Whooping Cough Vaccine Shortage

WASHINGTON (UPI) — The American Academy of Pediatrics is concerned by spot shortages of the vaccine against whooping cough that one of three manufacturers recently stopped producing.

The academy said the two other makers have promised to in-

crease production to meet the demand, but noted they may also drop out because of litigation and increased liability premiums related to rare adverse reactions.

"We don't know what may happen," Susan Casey, an academy spokesman, said Tuesday. "We may need federal intervention" to

obtain and maintain an adequate supply.

The vaccine has been used in the United States to immunize children for more than a half century, nearly eliminating the disease that had been blamed for more than 7,500 deaths a year in the 1930s.

But for every 310,000 doses of the vaccine, there is normally one case of permanent brain damage — often resulting in million dollar lawsuits.

Paul Wehrle, president of the 27,000-member academy, said, "Pertussis (whooping cough)

would potentially produce 10 times the rate of brain damage as the pertussis vaccine."

Wehrle said, "The problems confronting us are not novel in the history of vaccines. When disease is rampant, we accept the more serious effects of vaccines.



GOT THE BACK TO SCHOOL ONE BATHROOM BLUES? IT'S TIME FOR SAMONS